

Environment 5 min read

Mapping CARICOM's path towards a sustainable energy future

With support from TAPSEC

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THE CARICOM REGIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY BUILDING CODE (CREEBC)

CREEBC benefits you, the people of the region through and more efficient building design, reduced energy at the individual & business level, lessened house gas (GHG) emissions and minimized imported fuels. The Code covers both commercial and residential buildings.



Imagine yourself at home right now. It's hot outside, but, somehow, it's always cooler inside your house. Storm clouds start rolling in so you decide to close the windows and turn on your air conditioning unit. You're not worried about the electricity cost because it's a new energy-efficient cooling system and you won't need to run it for long anyway. You decide to take a shower before you leave home and, once again, you don't worry about your light bill because your water's being heated free of charge by the solar water heating system sitting on your roof. You're running a bit late, but you're unbothered because you know you won't have to stop for gas on the way; your car's already charged up. You step outside, unplug it and hit the road.

When we think of policies and regulations, we most often imagine the ponderous machinery of government ministries and parliamentary sittings. We picture lengthy documents full of dense technical language completely unconnected to our day-to-day lives. It so happens that those documents form the frameworks that guide the operations of the institutions that serve us, they indicate which options can be made available to us and they chart the course forward for our communities, nations and the wider Caribbean region. More specifically, they influence our lives, from the houses we live in to the vehicles we drive and—in the case of energy—how we power it all. Those policies and regulations are the difference between houses built to keep us cool and withstand strong winds

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in a tropical storm and ones that suffer us with heat and lose their roofs in a stiff wind. They are the difference between electric water heaters that drive up our electricity bills and solar water heaters that do not. They are the difference between vehicles that are expensive to maintain and harmful to our health and environment and ones that are not.

Policies and regulations shape our lives and thanks to the support of the Technical Assistance Programme for Sustainable Energy in the Caribbean (TAPSEC), our region is in the process of developing policies and regulations that will allow us to make great progress on the path toward our sustainable energy goals. TAPSEC was a five-year Programme funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union (EU). It provided financial and technical assistance to the regional institutions working to shift the Caribbean region to a low-carbon, sustainable and climate-compatible development pathway with the aim of ensuring that all Caribbean citizens have access to modern, affordable and sustainable energy services. To achieve these aims, TAPSEC worked closely with several regional institutions, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) and the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), supporting their efforts to create meaningful change via many avenues, including projects that enable sound policy and regulations development.

Charging Ahead with Electric Vehicles

In a region as heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels for transportation as ours, any shift towards energy sustainability and efficiency requires careful planning and a strategic approach. While Electric Vehicles (EVs) are the more fuel-efficient and environmentally-friendly transportation option, if we want to be able to hit the road in EVs in the near future, the right policies, regulations and infrastructure will need to be in place.

To that end, the CARICOM Secretariat established a Regional Electric Vehicle Working Group in 2017 to look into the details of a regional approach to EV rollout. Based on their findings, the Secretariat partnered with the CCREEE to develop the Regional Electric Vehicle Strategy (REVS) with TAPSEC's support. This comprehensive framework is designed to provide all CARICOM Member States with guidance on the policies, instruments and actions they need to smoothly transition their transportation sectors from traditional Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles to EVs.

Written for all major EV stakeholders, the REVS walks readers through the process of developing a vision statement, creating stakeholder engagement, drafting regulations, catering for infrastructural needs, and creating a capacity development curriculum and financial incentive programs. It provides four application examples based on Jamaica, Belize, St. Lucia and Montserrat, each of which serves as a roadmap for a different type of CARICOM Member State: large islands, continental nations, OECS

islands and smaller island states. Finally, it includes a case study based on Barbados—the region's transport electrification leader—which provides concrete examples of how the transition can be approached.

With the REVS in hand, nations across the Caribbean are equipped to make a strategic pivot towards EVs, particularly with support from the CCREEE, for which it remains a key strategic programme, and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), which is exploring avenues for supporting the move financially.

Creating Comfort with Energy-Efficient Building Codes

Much like homes in temperate countries are designed to reduce energy costs while keeping their occupants warm during the winter, Caribbean homes can be designed to keep us cool while reducing our electricity bills. With the right regulations in place, every Caribbean citizen can eventually live in a home built for energy-efficient comfort.

The CARICOM Regional Energy Efficiency Building Code (CREEBC) was designed to guide the regional building sector in creating more comfortable, climate resilient and energy efficient residential and commercial buildings. Developed in 2018 by the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and the CARICOM Secretariat Energy Unit, it outlines the requirements for constructing buildings that are well-lit, well-ventilated, well-cooled and resilient to severe weather events. Approved by the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED), the CREEBC is a regional standard for building construction.

In 2019, CROSQ partnered with TAPSEC to roll the CREEBC out across the Caribbean via a three-pronged approach that included, raising awareness, educating and training end users, and encouraging implementation. Through digital campaigns, training programmes and documents, and certifications and webinars, CROSQ ensured that the regional construction industry is well-prepared to construct buildings that will cut our energy costs and keep us comfortable.

Coming soon in part two: More on how TAPSEC partnered with regional institutions to promote sustainable energy policies and regulations that will improve lives across the Caribbean.

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